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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND  
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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: UN Security Council resolution 1680, Beirut-Damascus Declaration (5/18)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers featured a statement by the Syrian Foreign Ministry on the UN Security Council Resolution 1680 that was passed on Wednesday saying it poses "an unprecedented measure of interference in the core of sovereign and bilateral issues for member states to the United Nations. Commenting on the UNSC resolution dealing with diplomatic ties between Syria and Lebanon and border demarcation, the source noted that UNSC resolution 1559 did not refer to these two issues which had been inserted into international envoy Larsen's report in an artificial way and contrary to his mandate, ignoring that Syria has announced that it has no objection in principal to establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries when there is adequate circumstances and atmosphere.

It said the issue was originally discussed in a positive way in the recent meeting of the Syrian-Lebanese Higher Council. It added that Syria had notified Lebanon by a letter from the Prime Minister of Syria dated 11/14/2005 of its approval of the bill to resume action of the joint border committee between the two countries.

"Therefore the insistence of the resolution adopters to allow the UNSC interfere in contrary to the charter rules as well as Vienna Accord for diplomatic relations in issues under examination in a positive way, poses as an unjustified pressure as well as a provocation that will complicate issues instead of solving them," the source said.

The source added that Syria had repeatedly underscored that by redeploying all its armed forces and security apparatus from Lebanon on 4/26/05 Syria has met all its commitments under resolution 1559, but the adopters of resolution 1680, ignored on purpose Syria's positive stance and refrained from including it in the resolution.

The MFA source said that Syria has taken the necessary procedures to control borders with Lebanon and prevent infiltration from and to Syria, pointing out that the report of Larsen underlined the halt of all arms smuggling operations since February 2006 and

this is something that UNSC resolution did not mention. As Larsen's report and the issued resolution both did not deal with Lebanese media reports of arms smuggling operations to Lebanon by sea in favor of some Lebanese political sides, "therefore its ignorance does not serve the proclaimed quest for achieving security and stability in Lebanon."

The source noted that if the aim of the resolution adopter is to keep the sovereignty, independence and safety of the Lebanese territories as they claim, then where is their keenness while Israel's sea, land and air violations are repeated nonstop until now. These issues are ignored on purpose in the resolution, pointing out that their actions serve Israeli goals in the region.

It added that Syria appreciates and thanks the understanding stances that a majority of the UNSC members voiced via consultations over Syria's stance that asserts her keenness on Lebanon's sovereignty and independence as well as its regional safety, and on establishing normal relations between Syria and Lebanon reflecting the two peoples and sisterly countries interests far away from any foreign interference. Therefore, Syria sees that some parties that pushed to adopt the bill are concerned in the first and last place with executing its intentions and planned political schemes that target Syria and Lebanon as well as the region regardless of the two peoples interests and the security and stability in the region.

Papers also reported Foreign Minister Walid al-Mouallem's political review at the People Assembly in which he renewed Syria's desire to develop and boost relations with Lebanon in the interest of both countries.

"There are several pending issues we wish to study with Lebanon including diplomatic relations and border demarcation beginning from the northern borders; this requires finding a suitable and positive atmosphere between the two countries," Foreign Minister said.

"To mount pressure on the country, they accused Syria of the crime of assassinating former Lebanese Hariri without any evidence though Syria is the main loser from this crime; this proves that this crime is one part of a conspiracy against Syria and Lebanon," Mouallem added.

On Iraq, the Minister said that "Syria has always asked for a timetable for the foreign troops' withdrawal from Iraq; this timetable could relieve the Iraqi people that occupation is going to an end."

"At the same time, Syria supports the ongoing political process in Iraq, particularly because its success will enable the would-be national government to ask the withdrawal of occupation troops and the restoration of Iraq sovereignty," Mouallem added. On regional developments, the Minister underscored "We live in a wavering world that is changing from a bipolar world to a unilateral, and in our region, the world has changed to the unilateral pole which is allying with Israel."

"Current developments rendered a complicated and tense situation in the regional and international levels; in particular, those conditions put Syria in the US sights due to her national stances and rejection of war on Iraq," Foreign Minister said.

He added that the change of the regional power balances on the ground didn't affect Syria's steadfastness led by President Asad through commitment to her principles despite increasing US and non-US pressures.

The Minister stressed that in spite of US pressure on Syria to make the country isolated, Syria maintains good relations with the Arab countries, Iran, China and Russia as well as most of the Asian and European states. On relations with European countries, Mouallem said that the Association Agreement has not been signed as planned due to the US pressure and some EU states' stance, adding "we are awaiting EU stances to be less affected by US policies."

End of summary.

#### 12. Selected Headlines:

"In a political review at the People's Assembly, Foreign Minister Walid al-Mouallem: We are optimistic and our position is improving despite all the tension.... The US project is complicated and has failed in Iraq" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 5/18)

"An official source at the Foreign Ministry on the UN Security Council resolution 1680 describes the resolution as an unprecedented measure in international relations and it serves Israeli interests. The source added that we care for sovereignty and independence of Lebanon and that Syria has met all commitments with regard to resolution number 1559. Russia, China and Argentina Representatives at the UN Security Council: "There is no need for such resolution and it contradicts the Syrian-Lebanese relations" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/18)

#### 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

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"Why was the Beirut-Damascus Declaration Issued Now? The Declaration Absolves Israel and the United States and Accuses Syria"

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A political commentator wrote in government-owned Tishreen (5/18): "Two days ago, and in a surprising move, a number of Syrian and Lebanese 'intellectuals' issued a statement they

called 'the Beirut-Damascus Declaration'. The statement painted a gloomy picture of the Syrian-Lebanese relations and contained many exposed falsehoods that do not convince a sensible mind or stand up to logic and evidence.

"Irrespective of the mistakes it contained, the injustice it did to Syria and its role, and the disregard it showed for all the sacrifices that Syria made over the years for the sake of Lebanon, the declaration suspiciously coincided with the intensive efforts that the administration of US President George Bush is making to obtain a new Security Council resolution calling on Syria to establish diplomatic relations with Lebanon. These malicious efforts are part of an American-Israeli campaign of pressure and threats against Syria. The question is: Why was the declaration issued at this particular time?

"One of the peculiarities of the declaration is that it tried to link the tension and the deterioration in the Syrian-Lebanese relations to the extension of President Emile Lahhud's term, not to the attempt by some Lebanese to use the bilateral relations in the recent period to serve their own interests and, consequently, to their exploitation of the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri to blow up the relations between the two countries and use Lebanon as a tool for aggression, invasion, and flagrant interference in Syria's affairs.

"It is strange that the signatories to the declaration ignored the most important stages in the history of the relations between the two countries and Syria's role before, during, and after the civil war. Syria worked at the various stages to preserve Lebanon's sovereignty and independence, whether during the American intervention in 1958 or during the Israeli aggressions before the deployment of the Syrian troops, a deployment that was based on a Lebanese, Arab, and international request. The signatories also ignore Syria's role over 30 years in ending the civil war, foiling the 17 May agreement, and confronting Israeli aggression.

"Today the signatories to the Declaration have acquitted Israel and the Bush administration of all the disasters and tragedies that Lebanon experienced and is still experiencing under the

American policy of hegemony and domination and leveled the accusation to Syria. We cannot assume good intentions here.

"We will not mention all the falsehoods in which the declaration's signatories entrapped themselves, from the issue of the assassination of Prime Minister Al-Hariri to the claim that the presence of the Syrian workers in Lebanon 'harms the Lebanese' -- something with which the Lebanese politicians and economists themselves disagree. Falsehoods, mistakes, and unfairness to Syria and the truth characterize the declaration and the signatories. This calls for legitimate questions about the motives of the declaration, the instigators, and the signatories. We leave this for the enlightened citizens to judge."

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#### "Submerge in Shame"

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Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (5/18): "The Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals, who signed the Beirut-Damascus Declaration, have forgotten all the sacrifices and martyrs that Syria offered for the sake of Lebanon and became involved, in good or bad faith, in the unjust and obvious campaign that the administration of US President Bush is leading against Syria....

"These intellectuals suggest in their statement that Syria threatens Lebanon while they forget Israel, its subversive role, and its ceaseless aggression....

"Despite this, we still believe that the genuine national

intellectuals realize the dimensions of the unjust campaign against Syria. Throughout the Arab world, these intellectuals defend Damascus' national and pan-Arab positions. In every time and place we see rare groups that ignore facts and accept to sink in shame and get involved in campaigns against the forces of resistance and steadfastness. And we realize that even within these groups some individuals were misled by attractive slogans. But the truth will expose these people no matter how long it takes...."

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#### "Upcoming Dues"

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Khalid al-Ashhab, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawrah, wrote (5/18): "There are growing indications that the American political plan in the Arab region has reached the last stages of bankruptcy, or let us say entered the stage of retreat and withdrawal....

"While, historically, the failure of US plans in the region is nothing new, the failure of this particular plan will be different because it will affect not only the administration that adopts it and the tools that are being used to implement it, but also a whole trend that brings together many Americans who agreed, consciously or unconsciously, on a host of ideas and thoughts that constitute the ideological structure of this plan....

"This ideology turned the United States into an international enemy that will need many years before it comes out of the corner into which it backed itself.

"If the United States and Americans get a chance to clean and rehabilitate themselves, what chance do those non-Americans who gratuitously recruited themselves in the service of American plan will have to clean a picture that has become worse and uglier than the American picture itself?"